

## 2 Strengthen our position as global leaders in Alaska Native and Indigenous programs

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### Who do we want to be?

Our goal is to build and enhance global leadership in Alaska Native and Indigenous programs, research and workforce development. Our vision is that we are a global leader throughout the circumpolar North, the Americas and the Pacific, in that we have: (1) state-of-the-art research, learning and cultural activities facilities in the form of the Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center and Interpretative Park, as well as in our community campuses; (2) Alaska Native and Indigenous degree programs and pedagogy; (3) successful recruitment, retention and degree completion of Alaska Native and Indigenous students; (4) Alaska Native and Indigenous research, knowledge production and publications; (5) Alaska Native and Indigenous leadership development; (6) Alaska Native and Indigenous workforce development; and (7) tribal and Alaska Native/Indigenous community partnerships, service and community education.

We seek to provide a space on the UAF campus that will be a safe Alaska Native/Indigenous place for teaching, learning and sharing, a space that will house the leading experts in relevant fields, and a place to partner and collaborate with relevant institutions, governments and other entities. We envision this space to be a catalyst site for initiatives in the fields of Alaska Native and Indigenous studies. This space will further house and generate an Alaska Native/Indigenous academy, with degree programs teaching in substantive areas important to Alaska Native and Indigenous communities, and using tailored and effective pedagogies. We envision that this space will house research focusing on Alaska Native and Indigenous communities, and that in addition to broad, interdisciplinary research, there will be research driven by these communities, with Alaska Native and Indigenous lead researchers.

We further seek to successfully recruit, retain and to achieve the maximal degree completion of our Alaska Native and Indigenous students. We seek to develop leaders in self-determination, in government, in business, in the community, in nonprofits, in nongovernmental organizations, and in education and health services provision. We also seek to prepare Alaska Native and Indigenous students for the workforce, including for high-demand jobs that overlap rural areas, tribal government jobs, jobs in nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations, and jobs in education and health care.

In undertaking all of the above, we also seek to partner and collaborate with Alaska Native/Indigenous entities. Finally, we seek to partner and collaborate with Alaska Native and Indigenous entities to undertake community education and service programs in areas important to these communities.

### Who are we now?

Through the departments, programs, centers and institutes across the UAF colleges and campuses that comprise our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs, we are already a leader in recruiting and educating Alaska Native students from the occupational endorsements to the Ph.D. levels. We are a leader in recruiting and educating both Alaska Native and Indigenous students at the master's degree and Ph.D. levels. We are also a leader in using teaching approaches (pedagogies) that are successful in teaching Alaska Native and Indigenous students. However, within Alaska, our focus is primarily cultural and tribal. We need to expand what we do to include Alaska Native faculty, programs and course content with respect to the concerns of Alaska Native corporations. Additionally, in order to become a global leader in Indigenous programs, we need to expand what we do to include Indigenous faculty, programs and course content in the U.S. and internationally, beyond Alaska and the circumpolar North.

### Specifics about current programs:

- **Alaska Native and Indigenous programs** — A cluster of departments, programs, centers and institutes across the UAF colleges and campuses comprise our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs. The cluster on the Fairbanks campus includes: the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC), the Alaska Native Language program (ANLP), the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies (CXCS) in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), and the School of Education's Alaska Indigenous Teacher Corps. It also includes the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) within the Institute of Arctic Biology (IAB). Within the College of Rural and Community Development (CRCDD), it includes the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development (DANSRD), Ethnobotany program (EBOT), High-Latitude Range Management program (HLRM), Tribal Management program (TM) and Rural Human Services program (RHS).
- **Degree programs** — The UAF Alaska Native and Indigenous programs are leaders in instructing Alaska Native students across the occupational endorsement, A.A., B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. levels. Our programs are also leaders in instructing Alaska Native and Indigenous students at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels. However, our programs and the content of our courses are predominantly focused on rural Alaska and the circumpolar North. In order to become a global leader in our Indigenous programs, we will need to recruit more Indigenous faculty and expand our programs and course offerings to additionally reflect U.S. and international Indigenous peoples and their concerns. With respect to Alaska, we also need to expand our programs and course offerings to reflect and serve the concerns of the Alaska Native corporations at both the regional and village levels.
- **Effective approaches to teaching Alaska Native/Indigenous students (pedagogy)** — The UAF Alaska Native and Indigenous programs are already leaders in the instruction of Alaska Native and Indigenous students in ways that align with their cultural/traditional values and learning styles, regardless of the discipline taught, modality of delivery or age of the student. In our experience, the most effective method of course delivery, for many of our programs/courses, is the in-person cohort model. Our current programs focus on course content that is highly relevant to Alaska Native and Indigenous populations, from their point of view, and content that raises practical and academic questions pertinent to their communities. Our courses are also taught at a pace that respects the double effort that Alaska Native and Indigenous students experience in simultaneously navigating Western and Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems, and the touch points between them. However, presently, we do not have the resources to offer in-person cohort programs or courses in all relevant areas.
- **Student recruitment, retention and completion** — We are a leader in recruiting and creating educational pipelines for Alaska Native students. This is in large part due to our outstanding and proven Rural Student Services program. Today RSS recruits and works to retain Alaska Native students who are nondegree seeking or who are pursuing degrees (certificate, associate and/or bachelor degrees). However, the number of students served has greatly increased over time, while the number of RSS staff has decreased.
- **Research and publications** — We do have a way to go in creating new space for diverse, innovative, academic knowledge; leading in collaborative interdisciplinary research; and valuing Indigenous community goals, with Indigenous-led research, using Indigenous research methods, and Indigenous-led publications/journals. We need to structurally and financially support the Cross-Cultural Studies program and the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development faculty to undertake such research and publication.
- **Leadership Development** — While our vision is to be a global leader in Alaska Native and Indigenous leadership development across the areas of self-determination, government, business, community, nonprofits and NGOs, and education and health, the leadership training curriculum in our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs are not fully elaborated in certain areas. These include Alaska Native corporation leadership training, education and health.

- **Workforce development** — At present, our Tribal Management and Rural Human Services programs prepare students for the rural Alaska workforce. Our Cross-Cultural Studies program, and its Indigenous studies Ph.D., prepare students for academic jobs. However, while our vision is to train students for high-demand jobs that overlap rural areas, at present our Alaska Native/Indigenous programs, arguably, do not specifically train our students for all these jobs — tribal, Native nonprofit, nonprofit/NGO and Alaska Native corporation jobs; health and behavioral health jobs; and K-12 teaching and higher education academic jobs.

## How do we get there?

We can achieve our vision by structurally and financially supporting our existing Alaska Native and Indigenous programs by facilitating collaboration among them and by hiring new faculty and staff to support program expansions. To attract new and visiting faculty, we need to endow faculty positions. To ensure Alaska Native and Indigenous student recruitment, retention and degree completion, we need to build an endowment for student tuition. To continue and enhance the effective teaching of Alaska Native and Indigenous students, we need to increase the resources supporting in-person cohorts for these programs and courses. To ensure that our research and publications are community-focused and -driven, we need to raise funds for Alaska Native/Indigenous faculty and student research. With respect to leadership development in Alaska, current efforts should be supported with program and course expansions meeting the concerns and interests of the Alaska Native corporations. With respect to workforce development (priority areas include K-12 teachers and behavioral health providers), we need to further research existing programs and the skills they teach, which employers hire (or do not hire) program graduates, and what employers are looking for, to understand the links and to redesign and/or enhance our program offerings.

### Action items:

- **Degree programs** — 1) Strengthen existing degree programs. 2) Attract new talent, including Alaska Native and Indigenous Ph.D.s. 3) Recruit additional faculty with expertise in Alaska Native and Indigenous studies in the circumpolar North, the Americas and the Pacific. 4) Establish and launch visiting faculty programs. 5) Build an endowment for faculty. 6) Enhance our K-12 teacher training program that is designed to serve Alaska Native and Indigenous communities; that trains teachers to teach Indigenous knowledge and instruct through Indigenous language(s); that offers teachers in training a way to obtain their degrees from home; and that is designed to move teachers in training from being paraprofessionals to teachers. 7) Support existing partnerships, and seek to build more partnerships with rural school districts; (8) Build our capacity and expand to teach more Native languages, and make Native language teaching available via distance. 9) Develop professional intensives and certifications. 10) Engage and collaborate among our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs.
- **Effective approaches to teaching Alaska Native/Indigenous students (pedagogy)** — 1) Increase the use of, and funding for, face-to-face cohort learning models. 2) Orient all faculty with respect to Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. 3) Develop key learning objectives that are embedded in all syllabi that represent awareness and commitment to Alaska Native and Indigenous education. 4) Integrate place-based and modern distance teaching methods. 5) Allow for and foster the knowledge of peoples' relationship to the land to be a gateway into academic education. 6) Document and disseminate current teaching practices that use Alaska Native and Indigenous pedagogical approaches. 7) Weave Alaska Native and Indigenous pedagogies throughout all UA programs. 8) Continue to create a safe learning space in the classroom, on the phone and on distance platforms for Alaska Native, Indigenous and other students to learn and share. 9) Ensure equitable access to online learning opportunities.

- **Recruitment, retention and degree completion of Alaska Native and Indigenous students** — 1) Continue to build out both academic and professional degree pathways; 2) Create more academic pathways that will bring students from A.A./A.A.S. to the B.A./B.S. and then to the graduate levels in particular disciplines. 3) Re-evaluate financial aid models. 4) Identify tuition disparities for international students. 5) Establish an endowment for student tuition, including international students. 6) Build on the existing RSS program by hiring more RSS staff to keep up with the increasing demand for services. 7) Fill the DANSRD student success coordinator position to recruit students into the ANS and RD programs. 8) Increase the number of CCS faculty and expand internal collaboration with faculty of other colleges to meet demand in the Indigenous Studies Ph.D. program. 9) Increase the number of TM faculty to meet demand in the Tribal Management program. 10) Expand the availability of the Rural Human Services program to additional regions of rural Alaska. 11) Consider shifting the paradigm of how we evaluate success, e.g., the 10-year B.A. 12) Establish a pre-start of the semester multiweek onboarding program for first-time Alaska Native and Indigenous students to better prepare them for success with academic refresher sessions, peer support development and comprehensive advising.
- **Alaska Native and Indigenous research, knowledge production and publications** — 1) Seek and acquire funding for both Alaska Native/Indigenous faculty/student/community-defined research and interdisciplinary research. 2) Incentivize collaborative research across disciplines, UAF and UA using broad interdisciplinary research teams that focus on Indigenous communities. 3) Incentivize research that uses a holistic approach looking at community well-being and sustainability; (4) Fund M.A.- and Ph.D.-level student research in CCS and RD. 5) Hire more CCS, ANS and RD faculty so that all tripartite faculty will have an equal chance to undertake research and publication in their fields and to build out the Alaska Native/Indigenous and related Rural Development academies. 6) Hire more Alaska Native/Indigenous faculty into tripartite positions across all programs and fields to support research, scholarship and publication 7) Fund and fill two DANSRD student success coordinator positions — one for undergraduates and one for graduate students. 8) Fund sufficient annual travel/costs for faculty to attend academic conferences. (Some of this travel is potentially international.) 9) Fund the DANSRD journal. 10) Engage and collaborate among our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs, especially with CANHR and the One Health initiative. 11) Invest in cross-cultural sharing and learning with other Indigenous university programs and groups, e.g., with Maori.
- **Alaska Native and Indigenous leadership development** — 1) Engage current leaders in all the identified areas to inform the curriculum development, to participate in courses and trainings, and to evaluate and refine the foregoing. 2) Develop leadership training curriculum and professional certificate programs in the areas of the Alaska Native corporations, rural/Alaska Native/Indigenous education and rural/Alaska Native/Indigenous health (particularly mental health and wellness). 3) Consistently fund and support the DANSRD leadership seminar courses, which use a face-to-face cohort model and allow students to travel to sites of instruction. 4) Consistently fund and support TM symposia where rural and Alaska Native/Indigenous leaders come to UAF to share and collaborate. 5) Fund and support expanded symposia across the UAF Alaska Native/Indigenous programs and across the leadership topics.
- **Alaska Native and Indigenous workforce development** — 1) Research which employers and industries hire our students, and the skills that they wish to see in our graduates. 2) Research which of our Alaska Native/Indigenous programs/curriculum funnel students into high-demand jobs that overlap rural areas; tribal, Native nonprofit, non-profit/NGO and Alaska Native corporation jobs; health and behavioral health jobs; and K-12 teaching and higher education academic jobs. 3) Research which other UAF and UA programs/curriculum funnel students into these same jobs and determine when to build and when to collaborate. 4) Align what employers/industries seek in terms of skills with what we teach, to the extent that it is consistent with our overall vision. 5) Align the degrees that we offer with the needs of Alaska Natives/Indigenous peoples and their communities. 6) Create linkages and stronger partnerships for moving paraprofessionals into professional status, e.g., teachers' aides to teachers, in high-demand and high-need areas.

- **Tribal and Alaska Native/Indigenous community partnerships, service and education** — 1) Research who our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs currently partner and collaborate with. 2) Research the types of Alaska Native and Indigenous community service programs that our programs currently undertake. 3) Research the types of Alaska Native and Indigenous community education programs that our programs currently undertake. 4) Compare what we are already doing with the known areas of interest and priority for Alaska Native and Indigenous communities to identify gaps or priority areas, and seek further partnerships, collaborations and funding to fill the gap or to meet the priority. 5) Engage the Alaska Native/Indigenous leaders and communities in the identification of the need for, and the conception, design and implementation of, all service and community education efforts.

## Concluding remarks

UAF is committed to being a global leader in Alaska Native and Indigenous programs, research and workforce development. We are currently a global leader in Alaska Native cultural and tribal programs, in the recruitment of Alaska Native students and in interdisciplinary research in rural Alaska. We are committed to creating a safe, centralized space for our Alaska Native and Indigenous programs in the form of the Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center. We are also committed to expanding our leadership to include Indigenous programs and students throughout the circumpolar North, the Americas and the Pacific. Within Alaska, we seek to expand our program and course offerings to include the concerns of Alaska Native corporations. With the proposed structural and financial supports, we will be able to achieve our vision of global leadership.

